
Modernizing trends in translation works by Borys Hrinchenko's family

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Abstract. Ukrainian literary translation differs historically from its neighboring countries due to the long-standing policy of governmental bans and restrictions within Russian Empire. Besides this, Borys, Maria and Nastya Hrinchenko translated a great number of issues of world literature in the end of 19th – beginning of 20th century. The list of translation executed by Borys Hrinchenko and his family shows well considered programme of modernizing their own literature.

Key words: translation, modernizing, nation building, stylistic richness, language, literature.

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Since the moment of 'cultural turn' in the Western translation taking place in 1990s, there has been a number of noticeable and influential researches dedicated to the influence of literary translation on anti-colonial resistance and shaping of national identity. In his recent essay entitled *"Local contingencies: translation and national identities"*, a well-known American researcher and Roman translator Lawrence Venuti [1] points to a bright example of Catalan language overshadowed for centuries by its more powerful neighbours [2]. This situation is somewhat similar to Ukrainian one, since the Ukrainian language was forbidden for a long time. It was officially banned by the Russian Empire up to 1905. In particular, it was forbidden to use Ukrainian in any printed translations. There was a stereotype of a 'household language' (a so called 'muzhutska mova'). In such conditions, translation acquired not only informative but also modernizing and nation building functions. Quite similar to Catalan translators, their Ukrainian colleagues made many efforts to enrich their literature with the works of foreign classics, and make their language flexible and elegant. Their aim was to establish a full status of their native language and culture. Under official bans, the translators often printed their works in Galychyna (Galicia, a Western part of Ukraine under the rule of more liberal Austrian Empire). Moreover, the translation has long been playing a pivotal role in shaping a modern Ukrainian national identity.

Within the framework of the 'cultural turn' methodology, Maksym Strikha in his monograph *"Ukrayins'kyi khudozhnii pereklad: Mizh literaturoiu i natsiyetvorenniam"* [3] (Ukrainian literary translation: Between literature and nation-making, 2006) has demonstrated that the Ukrainian translation differs historically from the translation of its neighbouring countries such as Russia and Poland. In the first place, this is due to the extent of its involvement into the process of nation building. The literature of the other countries mentioned influenced greatly on shaping the Ukrainian national literature. At the beginning of the 19th century, Ukrainian poets-romanticists rehashed Virgil, Horace, Pushkin and Mickiewicz not only to find a new audience, but also to make those-times audience of the Ukrainian readers appreciate new resources of their native tongue for translating the texts that sounded then only in the metropolitan languages [4]. Later on,

the Ukrainian translation has become the reason for the Valuyev's Circular (1863) [3] and the Em's ban (1876) [5], while all of the Ukrainian-language translations and publications had been banned.

Vitaly Chernetsky in his recent work *"Nation and translation: literary translation and the shaping of modern Ukrainian culture"* [2] asserts that the leading Ukrainian translator of 1960s M. Lukash has been sure that his translation activity means much more than just an attempt to influence on the conditions and perspectives of development of national culture with the aid of translation. He has longed to change the image of the Ukrainian culture and activate the traditions of language and style being developed in rather difficult conditions of development of the national culture [2, p. 2].

One can hardly imagine the Ukrainian translation without the activities by Borys Hrinchenko's family. The literary work of the prosaist, poet, dramatist and publicist Borys Hrinchenko, his wife Maria Hrinchenko (who signed her works with a pseudonym Zagirnya), and their daughter Nastya Hrinchenko was subordinated to educational tasks. Many scholars and researchers have studied the creative work by Borys Hrinchenko and his family. S. Yefremov, O. Biletskyi, M. Rylskyi, I. Pilchuk, V. Yaremenko, O. Nezhyvyi, L. Nezhyva, A. Pohribnyi, M. Moskalenko are among them [6]. Nonetheless, they have analyzed it purely in the framework of a populist ('narodnyk') paradigm so that any modernizing aspects have been disregarded completely. For the Ukrainian scholars of the newer school such as S. Pavlycko, T. Gundorova, V. Ageyeva etc., Hrinchenko is not interesting *a priori*, because he is treated as a 'populist' ('narodnyk'), who has been working for Ukrainian peasants only. However, as I intend to demonstrate in the present essay, the translation activity by Borys Hrinchenko's family should also be treated in frame of a program for modernizing the Ukrainian language and literature.

As will be shown below, in spite of the Hrinchenko's 'populist' directive, his work on translations (as well as Maria and Nastya Hrinchenko's work) can be evaluated as an important component of vast modernizing efforts aimed at changing the cultural situation in Ukraine and bringing up a wider circle of conscious Ukrainian intelligentsia. Their publishing activity has been crowned by publication of many artistic, socio-political and popular scientific books, mostly translated.

Despite the fact that the creative work by Borys Hrinchenko and his family has been a subject of researches undertaken by different scholars, the main aspects of the translation activity of Hrinchenkos need a more profound study, taking into account the methodological directives drawn up during the so called 'cultural turn' in the translation studies. Moreover, within this general turn, the national cultures of the former Soviet Union and the Eastern Europe have so far received relatively limited attention. That is why such a research would be interesting for both the Ukrainian and worldwide academic communities [2, p. 2].

The translations of works of the world literature executed by the members of Hrinchenko's family are characterized by naturalness of their language, stylistic richness and tact, as well as a subtle comprehension of originals' features. Unfortunately, these translations are now rare books because they have not been republished for almost a hundred years. However, it seems that inevitable 'aging' has almost not touched these translations [3, pp. 92-142]. The translations under study were performed from the most widespread European languages (German, French, Italian, English, and Russian). As for the less widespread languages, there were some translations from the intermediate texts written in German or Russian [7].

What is more, the Hrinchenko's translations do not represent 'timeless' texts addressed to a particular audience. It is important that B. Hrinchenko himself raised a problem of relationship

between translation and a peasant-reader (see, e.g., his article *"Tvory svitovoyi literatury na self, The works of world literature in the countryside*, which was afterwards included into the selected articles *"Pered shyrokym svitom"*, *In front of wide world*, 1907). Maria Hrinchenko (Zagirnya) was also engaged in this problem. So, a modern Ukrainian scholar and translator M. Moskalenko asserts that the theoretical considerations and generalizations by Maria Hrinchenko have been a result of not only her editorial work but also of a purposeful and thought-out research of the readers' interests [8]. Since M. Zagirnya worked at school, she knew very well what the readers were interested in and what they really needed. Borys and Maria Hrinchenko systematized the results of their researches (which they had held personally, gathering materials in the villages where they worked as teachers and where they held reading rooms) in their book *"Pered shyrokym svitom"* (*In front of wide world*, Kyiv, 1907) [9]. In fact, this book has become the first study of the national reading sociology in the history of our literature.

This systematic approach to translation was reflected in the critical surveys and epistolary inheritance of the writer. For instance, in his letter to a well-known Ukrainian writer and dramatist Panas Myrny, Borys Hrinchenko wrote about a necessity for enriching the literature with translations of works of the world literature. Besides, the Ukrainian theatre also needed a worldwide repertoire. Borys Hrinchenko wanted to place the Ukrainian theatre on the same level as the foreign theatres worldwide, which was the main reason why he translated dramas [7]. It would be important to notice that, during the years of 'Stolypin's reaction', the conditions for the Ukrainian literature and theatre worsened and almost all legal Ukrainian work was paralyzed by the governmental bans at the beginning of the First World War.

Owing to the efforts of Borys Hrinchenko in 1890-1900, Ukraine has got a library of the world literature and examples of creative work of the greatest foreign and Russian classics. It is interesting that Borys Hrinchenko started his activity from retelling *"Robinson Crusoe"* by D. Defoe (1891), rather than from translating. Later on he published the A. Daudet's prose and a number of his poetic translations of J. Goethe (*"The alder king"*), F. Schiller (*"The division of the Earth"*), A. Pushkin, H. Heine, V. Hugo, O. Koltsov, A. Maykov, O. Pleshcheyev, Ya. Polonsky, etc. In 1896 a translation of *"Maria Stuart"* by F. Schiller was published in Lviv [10, p. 139]. After the revolution of 1905 there appeared some extra possibilities for printing the Ukrainian translations within the borders of the Russian Empire. Then a great number of Hrinchenko's translations were published in separate books. Among them there were *"Wilhelm Tell"* by F. Schiller (1906; republished in 1908 and 1928), a cycle of H. Heine's poems *"North sea"* (1906), a comedy *"Business is business"* by O. Mirbeau, dramas *"Drayman Henschel"* (F. Henschel) and *"Sonnen"* (G. Hauptmann), a story *"Chernihivka"* by N. Kostomarov, *"Fairy tales"* and *"Mischievous child"* by Z. Topelius, a drama *"Native land"* by V. Sardou, and a drama *"Night games"* by A. Schnitzler [9, p. 139]. Together with his wife Maria, Borys Hrinchenko translated some poems in prose by I. Turgenev (1891) and a book *"Heart"* by E. de Amicis (1911; republished in 1919) (see., e.g., [11]).

Looking through this list, one can notice that, besides of the classical writers (Ukrainian translations of which had an educational function), it also includes the modernists G. Hauptmann and A. Schnitzler [2], whose dramas have been calculated exclusively upon educated audience.

This was despite Borys Hrinchenko realized real readiness of the mass audience to perceive only 'classic authors'. As he declared himself (see, e.g., [12]), at the beginning of the 19th century the Ukrainian peasants were ready to perceive in their native language some works by Charles Dickens, Walter Scott, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and even Sophocles's *"Antigona"*. From the other

hand, they noticed in *"Wilhelm Tell"* only a motive of revenge for family offence, while a motive of struggle with foreign enslavers remained unnoticed. Furthermore, deeply philosophical *"Hamlet"* and *"Demon"* by M. Lermontov remained completely incomprehensible [4]. In other words, the list of works translated by Borys Hrinchenko speaks vividly of a well-considered programme for modernizing the Ukrainian literature.

As for Maria Hrinchenko, the bulk of her translation activity is not less. In particular, her translations were published in some separate books. Among them I would mention L. Tolstoy's *"Why do people live?"*, N. Leskov's *"About Fedor Christianin and his friend Avraam Zhudovin"*, A. Tennyson's *"Kind soul"*, *"The adventures of Tom Sawyer"* by Mark Twain, a drama *"Monna Vanna"* by M. Maeterlinck, fairy tales *"How one peasant had fed two generals"* and *"The wild landlord"* by M. Saltykov-Shchedrin, H. Ibsen's plays *"An enemy of the people"*, *"Ghosts"* and *"Pillars of society"*, H. Suderman's dramas *"The end of Sodom"*, *"In native family"*; and *"Nora and Rosmersholm"*, *"Fight for rights"* by K. E. Franzos, *"The forest tale"* by D. Mamin-Sibiryak, E. de Amicis' *"Little clerk"*, Talbot's *"Foremen in Vilbaiya school"* and a novel *"Uncle Tom's cabin"* by H. Beecher Stowe [11]. Her translations were republished several times and got the greatest popularity among the readers of that time.

Besides of classical literature for children and youth, the list of translations by Maria Hrinchenko includes also some works of 'modernists' such as M. Maeterlinck and H. Ibsen (see [11]). This shows identical goals of the translation activities of Maria Zagirnya and Borys Hrinchenko. Their aim was to modernize the Ukrainian theatre while providing new dramas. In addition, Maria Zagirnya and Nastya Hrinchenko translated the works by Mark Twain [10, pp. 135–147] when the writer was still alive, thus testifying they had been working on translating modern actual works.

As for Nastya Hrinchenko, she took an active part in the revolutionary activities in 1905 and was imprisoned twice. That led to serious disease and her early death at the age of twenty four. However, she managed to do a lot as a translator. She translated O. Schreiner's tales and some examples of the prose by E. de Amicis. Besides, seven books translated by Nastya Hrinchenko were published in Kyiv in 1908: *"Dream life and real life"* by O. Schreiner, *"Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"* by Mark Twain, *"Flame of Ivan's night"* by H. Suderman, a critical essay *"Anatole France"* by G. Brandes, a tale *"Daughter Lilit"* by A. France, and dramas *"Gedda Gabler"* and *"Woman from the sea"* by H. Ibsen [10]. So, here one can see even more expressive trends to actual literature, which is difficult to restrict to the framework of 'populism' and enlightenment.

In general, the translations done by Borys Hrinchenko's family are characterized by high skills and high standards, stylistic richness, and a literary tact. Furthermore, their translations have proper intonation and rhythms. The Hrinchenko's translations of German romanticism masterpieces do not yield their artistic qualities to the standard Russian translations by V. Zhukovskiy, which have been guidelines for the majority of well-educated Ukrainian readers of Ukrainian language at the same level as the other European languages, overcoming the stereotype of 'being a household tongue'. The translations by Maria Zagirnya and Nastya Hrinchenko were highly valued for their stylistics. A Kyivan priest and Ukrainian activist O. Khodzitskiy [13] in his notes on the Ukrainian translation of H. Beecher Stowe's tale *"Uncle Tom's cabin"* has asserted that "the Ukrainian author pointed out her attitude to the original with the word 'retold' [13, pp. 1145, 1146]. This is true since each translation from a foreign language is in fact 'retelling'. Nevertheless, the translation mentioned above is so skilful that, in many places, it embellishes a

protocolary and somewhat dry original [13].

The translations by Hrinchenko's family are characterized by a natural language, stylistic richness, and subtle understanding of originals. Sometimes they tend to domestication though the originals' palette is skilfully reproduced. In spite of their age, these translations have not become archaic. Borys, Maria and Nastya Hrinchenko developed expressive means of the Ukrainian language, completely overcoming a stereotype of 'household tongue'. In the conditions of official bans these translations had not only informative but modernizing and building functions. Offering the Ukrainian versions of the works of world classics and the best actual examples of the worldwide literature for children and youth of that time, Borys, Maria and Nastya Hrinchenko have formed a new stratum of educated Ukrainian readers, which is important for the existence of modern Ukrainian culture. The translations by Borys Hrinchenko have contributed to strengthening a full status of the Ukrainian language. They have shown its usefulness to reproduce the works of the best worldwide literature. As already noticed, Hrinchenkos have translated not only the works by classics but also those by modernists such as G. Hauptmann, A. Schnitzler, M. Maeterlinck, and H. Ibsen. These were directed towards a stratum of 'advanced Ukrainian readers'. In its turn, the latter stratum was forming at that time just due to the very translators' efforts.

Summarizing, the present analysis of the translation activity of Borys Hrinchenko's family has demonstrated that Hrinchenkos have had their aim in modernizing the Ukrainian literature and theatre, placing it on the same level as the European ones, and showing that the Ukrainian language is fit for translation of masterpieces of the world literature.

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***Анотація.** Український переклад відрізняється від перекладів сусідніх країн через довготривалу політику урядових заборон і обмежень щодо нього в Російській імперії. Попри це, наприкінці 19-го – на початку 20-го століття Борис, Марія та Настя Грінченки переклали чимало творів світової літератури. Список перекладів, виконаних Б. Грінченком та його родиною, свідчить про добре продуману програму модернізації рідної літератури.*